



OFFICE OF CITY CLERK

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

August 25, 2008

The Public Safety Committee of the City of Mesa met in the lower level meeting room of the Council Chambers, 57 East 1st Street, on August 25, 2008 at 3:30 p.m.

COMMITTEE PRESENT

Dennis Kavanaugh, Chairman
Dina Higgins
Scott Somers

COMMITTEE ABSENT

None

STAFF PRESENT

Christopher Brady
Alfred Smith

(Items on the agenda were discussed out of order, but for purposes of clarity will remain as listed on the agenda.)

1. Items from citizens present.

There were no items from citizens present.

2. Hear a presentation, discuss and make recommendations on the TOPAZ Regional Wireless Cooperative.

Assistant Fire Chief Gary Bradbury addressed the Committee and displayed a PowerPoint presentation (a copy is available for review in the City Clerk's Office) to provide an overview of the TOPAZ Regional Wireless Cooperative (TRWC). He stated that forming a Regional Wireless Cooperative improves the capability of first responders to protect and serve and that a single system utilized by several agencies is more cost effective. Chief Bradbury reported that a partnership with the City of Phoenix began in the 1990's and that Mesa added other agencies as partners. He noted that Mesa (TOPAZ: Trunked Open Arizona Network) and Phoenix (PRWN: Phoenix Regional Wireless Network) agreed to split the system when the governance direction proposed by Phoenix did not support the level of accountability or autonomy required by Mesa and Mesa's partners, which includes agencies in Mesa, Gilbert, Apache Junction and Queen Creek. Chief Bradbury explained that Area Managers would be responsible for their respective zones, that each member would retain ownership and control of their infrastructure, frequencies and radio systems, and that each zone would operate as a sub-system of the TRWC network.

Chief Bradbury provided a history of the City's investment in the system, operating costs and a breakdown of the future financial commitment (see Attachment 1), and he reviewed the organization structure (see Attachment 2).

In response to questions from Councilmember Somers, Chief Bradbury advised that each member would be responsible for building the infrastructure, which would be managed by Mesa, and he stated that Mesa would obtain full cost recovery.

Chief Bradbury explained the membership options:

- Members
- Associates (Private ambulance companies that do not use the system for their business-related communications).
- Interoperability Participants (State and local entities that require interoperability).
- Conditional Participants (special events that require service for a short time).

Discussion ensued relative to the fact that Apache Junction has two separate entities as members, the city and the fire district; that this form of membership has not posed any problems to date; and that the decisions of the Board would not be impacted by this type of membership.

Chief Bradbury outlined the member admission process, which includes a coverage/capacity study funded by the applicant, Board review and approval, and construction and implementation of any required new systems as directed by the Board. He stated that items before the Board are decided by a numerical vote and that a weighted vote may be requested by any member, which provides Mesa with a minimum vote of 21 percent. Chief Bradbury advised that each member would continue to own and maintain their real estate and real property and control the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) licensed frequencies. He said that the system enables communication within buildings and that service is available 95 percent of time.

Chief Bradbury reported that the Administrative Manager is responsible for maintaining the network central equipment, the cost of which is recovered through capital improvement, subscriber unit fees, or special assessments. He advised that Area Managers are responsible for network equipment maintenance and members are responsible for subscriber unit maintenance. Chief Bradbury stated that the Board would establish policies and procedures, and that any conflicts would be addressed through mediation or legal action. He added that a 24 month notice is required to terminate participation in the TRWC. Chief Bradbury noted that the Mesa Communications Department continues to offer additional services, such as dispatch and maintenance services, through separate contract agreements for full cost recovery.

Chief Bradbury advised that the next steps would include approval of intergovernmental agreements by the respective Councils in September, appointment of an Executive Director and Board of Directors in October, and the first meeting of the Board in December of 2008, which will enable the TRWC to become operational in the first quarter of 2009.

Further discussion ensued relative to the fact that investments by the other municipalities include towers and property; and that improvements are accomplished on an amortized replacement cycle.

It was moved by Committeemember Somers, seconded by Committeemember Higgins, to recommend to the Council that staff's proposal regarding the TOPAZ Regional Wireless Cooperative be approved.

Carried unanimously.

Chairman Kavanaugh thanked Chief Bradbury for the presentation.

Fire Chief Harry Beck commended the group that has worked to implement the Regional Wireless system.

3. Hear a presentation, discuss and make recommendations on the Pawn Shop Regulatory Code changes.

Assistant Police Chief Mike Denney came forward to address the Committee.

Committeemember Somers stated that he was particularly interested in how other municipalities are addressing this issue.

Chief Denney advised that the cities of Peoria and Phoenix are utilizing pawn fees. He said that the Phoenix fee is at the "back end" after the transactions occur and that Peoria has an "up front" fee schedule. Chief Denney said that staff has met with the Pawn Association regarding possible options. He advised that Tempe, Chandler, Scottsdale and Flagstaff are considering implementing similar fees.

In response to questions from Committeemember Higgins, Chief Denney advised that Scottsdale does not license second-hand dealers and that Chandler plans to include second-hand dealers. He stated that there was consideration of including second-hand dealers in the Mesa proposal, but the decision was made to move forward to address only pawn shops at this time.

Chief Denney said that second-hand dealers account for about eight percent or 12,000 of Mesa's annual transactions and that the total pawn transactions anticipated in the current year is approximately 150,000.

Responding to comments by Committeemember Somers, Police Chief George Gascón advised that the department is attempting to initiate a process that will enable the City to recover the costs incurred to monitor these types of enterprises. He added that including second-hand stores and metal recyclers in the process may be considered in the future.

Chairman Kavanaugh said that two representatives of the Arizona Pawn Association requested the opportunity to address the Committee.

Trish Hart, 318 Roosevelt, Phoenix and Walter Cheeseman, 5225 East Blanche Drive, Scottsdale came forward to address the Committee.

Mr. Cheeseman commended the Mesa Police Department, and Detective Richard Milburn in particular, for the efforts made to develop a relationship with the industry, but he expressed opposition to the proposed regulatory changes. He stated that 80 percent of pawn shop customers redeem their property. Mr. Cheeseman suggested that alternatives to the \$3 per transaction fee be considered, such as increasing the licensing fee to \$1,000.00 per shop and requiring that second-hand dealers be subject to the same licensing requirement.

Ms. Hart expressed appreciation to the Police Department for including their association in the discussions regarding this issue. She expressed support for electronic reporting, and she said that their association would continue to cooperate with the Police Department.

Discussion ensued relative to the fact that Mr. Cheeseman's shop is participating in a test of an electronic reporting system for the Mesa Police Department; that the Pawn Association supports electronic reporting as a licensing requirement for pawnshops; that a number of commercial electronic reporting systems are available in the market; and that certain items do not have an identification system, such as sports equipment.

City Manager Christopher Brady noted that the budget reflects the assumption that a fee would be imposed for pawnshop transactions, and he stated that staff would like the full Council to consider this proposal.

Committeemember Somers recommended that this topic be placed on a future Council Study Session agenda for discussion.

4. Hear a presentation and discuss Automatic Aid Agreements.

Fire Chief Harry Beck introduced Assistant Fire Chief Dan Stubbs, who is in charge of the Operations Division, and advised that Chief Stubbs would present information on Automatic Aid Agreements.

Chief Stubbs displayed a PowerPoint presentation (a copy is available for review in the City Clerk's Office) to provide an update on the current Automatic Aid Agreement, which was authorized by the Council in 1997. He stated that the agreement ensured the appropriate unit closest to an incident responded without regard to jurisdictional boundaries. Chief Stubbs said that in 2008 year to date, two percent of Mesa's calls received automatic aid from another jurisdiction and four percent of the calls represent automatic aid provided by Mesa. He noted that the statistics do not reflect the complexity of the calls, and he stated that Mesa has more complex incidents than the neighboring cities. Chief Stubbs explained that in the event of a major incident in Mesa, automatic aid provided by Tempe and/or Chandler facilitates a timely response to other incidents within the City. He advised that two stations in Mesa have HazMat and technical rescue capabilities and, if several calls are received, Tempe and Chandler provide assistance with their specialized units.

Chief Stubbs noted that the location of fire stations in West Mesa in proximity to the borders with Chandler and Tempe results in Mesa units responding to frequent calls for service in these cities. He cited the example of Friendship Village in Tempe, which has frequent calls for service and is located ten seconds closer to the Mesa station. He said that a 90-day pilot program was initiated with Tempe, during which time Tempe will be dispatched to a call for service from Friendship Village when both Mesa's and Tempe's units are in their respective stations.

Chief Stubbs advised that discussions have been held with other cities in an effort to maximize the dispatch protocol policy that ensures the dispatch of the appropriate type of life support unit to an incident.

In response to a question from Committeemember Higgins, Chief Stubbs advised that "mutual aid" is provided to County islands. He explained that "automatic aid" is authorized through the

dispatch system without delay, but a request to the dispatch center for “mutual aid” must be authorized by a battalion chief based on the availability of units.

Discussion ensued regarding the fact that Tempe and Mesa have ambulance service contracts with different firms; and that discussions are ongoing to ensure that the costs for service are equitable.

Chief Beck stated the opinion that the level of cooperation in the East Valley is one of the most amazing regional efforts in the country. He noted that automatic aid also includes the following:

- Shared training, which reduces the City’s training costs.
- Shared operating procedures, which improves customer service and safety.
- More than 100 engine companies and 25 ladder trucks are available in the event of a Homeland Security incident in the Valley.
- Two regional dispatch systems that handle over 30 Valley fire departments.
- Innovation that results from joint projects and shared research.
- Best possible response times.

5. Hear a presentation and discuss potential program enhancements to the Volunteer Program and use of videoconferencing for training opportunities to possibly benefit response time.

Assistant Fire Chief Stubbs reported that response times have increased by 30 seconds in the past three years as a result of high call volume and long travel times. He advised that the department currently meets the four-minute response goal 61 percent of the time. Chief Stubbs stated that the Transitional Response Vehicle (TRV) pilot program has provided improved response times for Stations 202 and 205. He added that efforts are being made to increase the number of volunteers for existing programs, such as the Community Response Team, which provides assistance to families when a death results from natural causes and social service type calls.

Fire Chief Harry Beck explained that these strategies are being considered in order to increase the availability of units that are capable of responding to high-level emergencies. He added that the approach does not require additional personnel, but manages and reduces the department’s response times.

Chief Stubbs said that the Connector Program provides motorist assistance, serves as a centralized customer service center and works with the Red Cross when major incidents occur. He noted that training enables dispatchers to triage calls and ensures that the appropriate equipment is dispatched to an incident.

Chief Beck noted that in locations where the pilot TRV Program was in place, data indicated a ten percent increase in the availability of fire units for higher level emergencies.

Chief Stubbs stated that videoconferencing is essential for communication and training and enables fire units to remain in their area and available to respond to situations rather than traveling to the training facility. He estimated that this will increase the in-service availability of units by approximately 4,000 hours.

Discussion ensued relative to the fact that the four minute response time relates to "Code 3" calls for service; that the longer response time results when a high level unit responds to a low level call; and that voter approval of the upcoming bond proposal would not result in the availability of new fire stations and firefighters until fiscal year 2010/2011.

In response to a question from Committeemember Somers, Chief Beck stated that individuals identified as "frequent callers" were addressed by the Crisis Response Team or the Connector Program volunteers in order to provide information regarding the appropriate services that are available. He advised that the department presented an educational program at an adult center that was generating many calls for service, which resulted in a 50 to 60 percent decrease in the number of calls from that location. He noted that some consideration is being given to requiring these types of facilities to have an on-site emergency medical technician as part of the State licensing requirement.

Responding to questions from Committeemember Higgins, Chief Beck advised that the four-minute response time goal reflects the national standard. He explained that an individual who stops breathing or whose heart stops beating suffers irreversible brain damage after four minutes. Chief Beck further advised that a fire doubles every two minutes and that a roof typically collapses after eight minutes. He stated that the department is working with Information Technology to study video conferencing options, and he noted that Council action several years ago designated a cable television channel for Public Safety use. Chief Beck added that video conferencing could reduce the amount of overtime and the savings could be utilized to acquire equipment, if needed.

Chairman Kavanaugh thanked Chief Beck and Assistant Chief Stubbs for the presentation.

In response to a request by Committeemember Somers, Chairman Kavanaugh agreed that response times should be a topic for ongoing review by the Committee.

6. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Public Safety Committee meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Public Safety Committee meeting of the City of Mesa, Arizona, held on the 25th day of August 2008. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

LINDA CROCKER, CITY CLERK

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Attachments (2)